DAWN FELDHAUS/POST-RECORD

Mark Zech (left) and Kurt Williams (right) plan to open Mill City Brew Werks, at 339 N.E. Cedar St., in downtown Camas, by next summer. It will include a brewery (approximately 5,000 square feet) in the basement. Zech and Williams anticipate hiring 15 to 20 employees.

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Brewery and restaurant to locate in downtown Camas

Owners of Mill City Brew Werks plan to open by June 2013

BY DAWN FELDHAUS
Post-Record Staff

Two co-workers at Plexsys Interface Products, Inc., in Camas, expect to open a brewery and restaurant in the downtown core by next summer.

Mark Zech, of Washougal, and Kurt Williams, of Battle Ground, are among the owners of Mill City Brew Werks, which will be located at 339 N.E. Cedar St. Zech's wife, Francisca, and Williams' wife, Susan, will also be involved in the venture.

Previous occupants of the space have included Momo's Wholesale Designer Clothes and Stewart Title. A silent partner with Mill City Brew Werks is in the process of purchasing the building from Sandi Fischer. The purchase is expected to be completed in November.

Terms of the transaction are not being released. The building includes tenants Edward Jones and Kop Chai — both of which will remain open in their current locations.

Greg Goforth, a commercial real estate broker with Coldwell Banker Commercial, Jenkins & Associates, is representing the buyer.

"The Downtown Camas Association pushed to invite Mark Zech and company to come downtown and when he did, he and his wife

See **Brewery, page A5**

Continued from page A1

Fran fell in love with it — a beautiful downtown, clean, tree lined streets, lit up at night and the variety of shops," Goforth said. "Everyone made him feel right at home."

Zech said the brewpub should open by June 2013. It will include a brewery (approximately 5,000 square feet) in the basement. The bar and restaurant areas could seat approximately 75.

Zech described the dishes as "gastropub food — high-end beer and food."

"It will be a little upscale from normal pub fare, but yet affordable," he said. "Of course, the normal burgers and fries will be on the menu as well."

Zech and Williams anticipate hiring 15 to 20 employees, for the areas of food, brewing and service.

Washougal Brewing Co. LLC started in March with a two-barrel pilot system in the Zechs' garage.

"The city of Camas asked us to name the pub something other than Washougal Brewing Co.," Mark said. "We came up with Mill City Brew Werks to honor the heritage of Camas.

"We initially were looking at LaCamas Brewing that was started by John Nagal in 1885, but settled on Mill City Brew Werks to identify with Camas," he added. "Washougal Brewing Co. LLC still exists and could potentially be part of our 10-year plan to expand."

The beers currently being brewed include Fire Axe Cherry Wood-Smoked Porter, Milk Stout, German Hefeweizen, Whiskey Barrel Aged Porter, Winter Ale, Mill City Blonde Ale, Dragonfly CDA and Mill City IPA.

"My car is ready for me to get out of the garage," Zech said.

Carrie Schulstad, vice president and event liaison for the DCA, said the community has consistently asked for a brewpub through DCA surveys.

"This could mean more business and vitality in downtown, as well as more consistent foot traffic — especially evening traffic," she said.

Schulstad also expects the brewpub could attract other businesses to the downtown area.

"This could be morale building for merchants and the community to have an anchor spot filled," she said.

Zech said his long-range goals include opening additional brewpubs in other areas of Clark and Skamania counties and elsewhere in Washington.

During the Thursday board meeting of the Camas-Washougal Economic Development Association, President Paul Dennis said overall there are seven to eight companies interested in locating microbreweries in the Camas-Washougal area. They include Rail Side Brewing, Ltd., and Amnesia Brewing.

"You're building a little microbrew sector," Camas Mayor Scott Higgins said.

Rail Side Brewing, Ltd., is located at 421 "C" St., Unit B, in Washougal, while Amnesia Brewing is expected to open in February 2013, at 1834 Main St., also in Washougal.